

WV Encore Entrepreneur of the Year

Ralph and Amelia Garcia – Garcia's Latin Market LLC

Nominated by: Sharon Stratton, WV Small Business Development Center

The U.S. Small Business Administration's West Virginia District Director, Karen Friel is excited to announce Ralph and Amelia Garcia, owners of Garcia's Latin Market (GLM), as the SBA West Virginia 2016 Encore Entrepreneur of the Year. The Garcia's were nominated for the award by Sharon Stratton, Business Coach for the West Virginia Small Business Development Center.

Ralph Garcia, one-third of GLM's ownership team and West Virginia native, found entrepreneurship later in life. He started his career in Texas as a teacher and coach. West Virginia brought him home when his daughter enrolled at West Virginia University and he landed a vice principal position in the Albert Gallatin School District. The other two-thirds of the ownership team, his wife Amy and daughter Jennifer presented Ralph with an idea that would drastically change his career.

The Garcia family regularly hosted WVU international students and saw them struggle to find products from their country. This led them to the idea of opening Garcia's Latin Market. Ralph took an early retirement and joined his family in the venture.

Garcia's Latin Market is a small unique restaurant/retail store started in 2011. They utilized the West Virginia Small Business Development Center for business counseling and found a great asset in Sharon Stratton. They also received two SBA microloans through the First Microloan of West Virginia.

"It is an honor to present Ralph and Amelia with the Encore Entrepreneur of the Year Award," sates Friel. "Starting a new career after the age of 50 is challenging and these two have been successful with their venture."

SBA's West Virginia District Office celebrates Garcia's award during an invite only luncheon at the Robert H. Mollohan Research Center in Fairmont, Wednesday, May 4 at 12:00 p.m. The awards luncheon is emceed by WBOY reporter Nick Farrell; attendance includes Senator Capito, Congressman McKinley, and Secretary Burdette. [Click here](#) for a list of the 2016 West Virginia District Small Business Week winners.